DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 168 758 RC 011 182

AUTHOR DeMarco, Pat, Ed.; And Others
TITLE Yesterday Still Lives...Our Native People Remember Alaska.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 39p.; Photographs and parts may not reproduce clearly due to colored background; Prepared by Fairbanks Native Association, Alaska

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alaska Natives; American Indians; Biographical Inventories; *Biographies; *Classroom Materials; Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Background; *Eskimos; History; *Older Adults; Quality of Life; Rural Areas; Senior Citizens
IDENTIFIERS Alaska, *American Indian Literature; Cultural Journalism; Johnson OMalley Program

ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1978, seven teenagers and several staff members from the Fairbanks Native Association-Johnson O'Malley program set out to record some of Alaska's past by interviewing a number of older Alaska Natives and writing their biographical sketches. Some of the students spent a week along the Yukon River taping and photographing people; others travelled to Homer for the same purpose. This book is the result of that project. The sketches about nine native Alaskans present a picture of life as it was in the early years of this century. Oliver Amouak tells of the sled the caribou hunters used to transport meat; it was made from a curved tree trunk with the jawbones of the bowhead whale serving as sled runners. Kitty Harwood tells how she helped her mother during the fish runs by pulling her boat upstream to the family fish wheels. Lilly Pitka tells of the 1949 flood in Ft. Yukon when she sat on a neighbor's roof and watched her home float away. Some of the tales describe seal hunting, fishing, mining and trapping; others tell of coming of age ceremonies, of superstitions associated with that time, and of celebrations like the blanket toss and potlatches. Some folk medicines are mentioned, including stinkweed as a cure for stomach cancer. Concluding that although the times were hard, they were good, some of the old people regret the loss of the old ways, of respect for older people, and of the quiet times of the days gone by. (DS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED168754

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Patricia M. DeMarco

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

JAN 1979
ERIC/CE
RECEIVE

Yesterday Still Lives . . .

Our Native People Remember Alaska

RC 011182

© Copyright of Johnson-O'Malley Program, Fairbanks Native Association, 1978. Permission to reproduce this material must be obtained from FNA-JOM.

Cover: Cabin at Kokrines, near Ruby.
(Sketch by LindaMae Scolman).

Yesterday Still Lives . . .

Doretha Amouak
Elaine Cederstrom
Howard Gibson
Bobby Hunter
Donna Kious
Arthur Noble
Leah Williams

Edited by Pat DeMarco

Our Native People Remember Alaska

1978

Back row (left to right): Bobby Hunter, Arthur Noble and Howard Gibson. Center row: Doretha Amouak, Elaine Cederstrom and Leah Williams. Front row: Pat DeMarco. Not pictured is Donna Kious. (Bruce Dunkle photo).

Agnes Moore, Pat DeMarco and Donna Kious proofreading texts. (Bruce Dunkle photo).

This book is dedicated to the
Fairbanks Native Education Committee.

Acknowledgments

This is the first publication of this type to be put out by Fairbanks Native Association-Johnson O'Malley (FNA-JOM) Program. It came about from a suggestion offered by Fairbanks Native Education Committee member Linda Badten. Originally ten students were to be involved but when time and budget cuts were made, positions for five students remained to spend a month preparing biographical sketches of older Alaskan Natives.

The staff was able to interview several local Natives before two of the students spent a week boating down the Yukon River and assisted in taping and photographing many interesting people on the river. Three of the other students spent a week traveling to Homer and worked on transcriptions when time permitted. This program was assisted by two CETA students the last few weeks which helped us to meet our deadlines.

All of us who worked on the book would like to thank the following people for all the work, support and encouragement that they gave us:

Fairbanks Native Education Committee Members:
- Linda Badten
- Agnes Griffith
- Mary Ann Warden
- Dennis Demmert
- Anna Jacobson

Yukon River Staff
- Jim Johnson, Skipper of the **Clara J.**
- Roger McPherson
- Agnes Mayo Moore

Homer Trip Staff
- Pat DeMarco
- John Dickerson
- Debbie Chaffee
- Debbie Karns

All the people up and down the Yukon River and the many people who shared their hospitality on the road to Homer.

Ron Inouye, Center for Cross Cultural Studies, University of Alaska.

Rene' Bahuto, University of Alaska Archives

Clara Johnson, Youth Education Coordinator, FNA-JOM

Sharyn Tolle, Editor, **New River Times**

Bruce Dunkle, Media Specialist, FNA-JOM

LindaMae Scolman, Artist

And to everyone at FNA-JOM for all their special support.

—Pat DeMarco

Our editor, Pat DeMarco, learning about fish camps first-hand. (Mike DeMarco photo)

Introduction

Children who live in cities do not always have the opportunity to visit with and learn about the elders in their community—not like Native village children do, especially those who spend the summer in fish camp. There are so many influences in the life of a city youngster that it's hard to imagine what living was like forty or even thirty years ago. It seems that our old world is whirling so fast that we can't take everything in or spend time looking back. However, in the summer of 1978, several Fairbanks Native Association-Johnson O'Malley (FNA-JOM) staff and seven teenagers set out to find the past.

The book's title, **Yesterday Still Lives**, was chosen by the young people in the program after they began working with some of the elders in our community and along the Yukon River. These youths gained a real appreciation for what they were hearing from the older people. As you read this book, I'm sure you, too, will be impressed with the life our people once led. The hard times and hard work did not dim their spirits but invigorated their lives. As Kitty Harwood states, "Those were good days, though. They were hard but they were good."

I enjoyed reading the final product; but I enjoyed even more seeing the young people discover the complexity and wonder of human life and how precious memories are to any culture and people. They are particularly important to Alaskan Natives who have no written history but share a rich oral history.

It is with much feeling and pride that the FNA-JOM staff, young and old, present to you **Yesterday Still Lives.**

—Clara Johnson
Youth Education
Coordinator
FNA-JOM

(Margie Bauman photo).

Barrow
Kobuk River
Nome
Koyukuk River
Porcupine R.
Fort Yukon
Yukon R.
Stevens Village
Koyukuk
Tanana
Rampart
Shaktoolik
Unalakleet
Ruby
Fairbanks
Tanana River
Yukon River
Kuskokwim River
Anchorage

Table of Contents

Oliver and Olga Amouak —
Doretha Amouak and Arthur Noble 2
Kitty Harwood — Doretha Amouak..... 6
Johnny Honea — Donna Kious 9
Bill McCarty — Howard Gibson 11
Agnes Mayo Moore — Elaine Cederstrom 16
Lilly Pitka — Leah Williams 20
Edith Tegoseak — Donna Kious 24
Waltor Woods — Bobby Hunter 27

Olga and Oliver Amouak. (Bruce Dunkle photo)

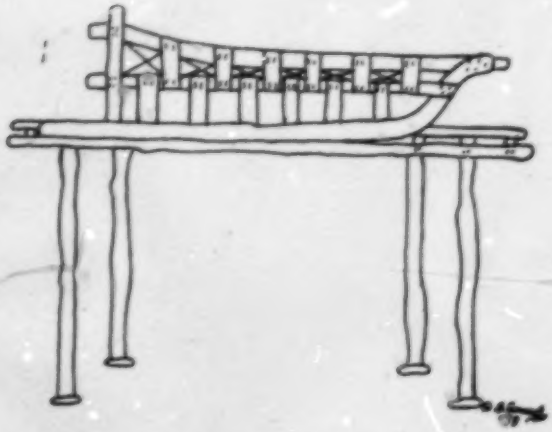
Oliver and Olga Amouak

Oliver and Olga Amouak are Eskimos from Norton Sound. Oliver was born in Unalakleet on May 10, 1895, and Olga was born in Stebbins on February 25, 1900. They were married on January 16, 1916, in a mining camp where Oliver worked. In the following years, Olga gave birth of 15 children. Of these, six are still living. Oliver and Olga have been blessed with 28 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

Because of the demand of just living and surviving in this rough arctic environment, neither one had time for much formal education. They, nevertheless, lived exciting and adventure-filled lives. Oliver tells of some of these adventures in this interview.

—Doretha Amouak
Arthur Noble

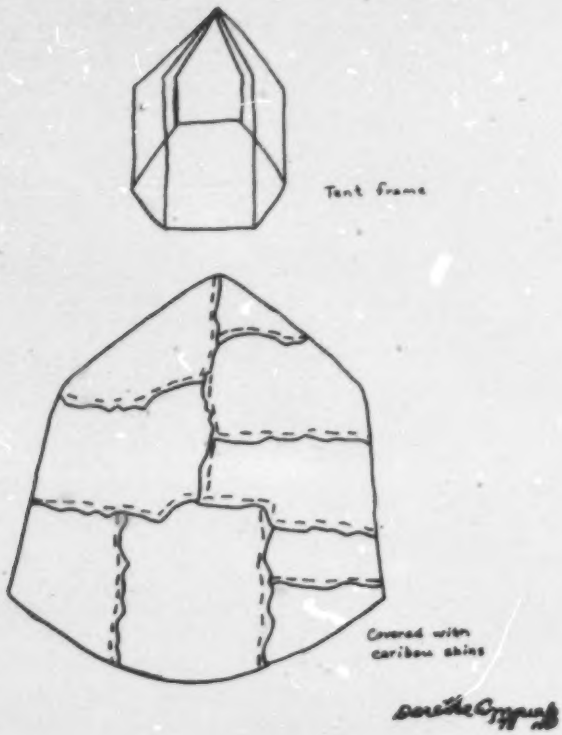
When Oliver and Olga were young, school did not take up too much of their time. Oliver ran away from school when he was in the third grade because he thought school was a waste of time. He felt it was more important to learn how to survive and provide for his family. In those days there were no supplies like flour, sugar or tea. Everything had to come from the earth or from things made with your hands. Olga, too, was busy with her family and did not attend school as a child.



(Sketch by Doretha Amouak)

When Oliver was little there were about seven dogs in the village. A family had maybe one or two dogs each. Oliver remembered a hunting story. At one time some hunters went caribou hunting out in the hills. They had to go 60 miles one way. They would take a big sled that was made from a tree with a curve near the roots. That natural curve would be put up in the front of the sled and they would use the jawbone from the bowhead whale for runners. The sled was sixteen feet long and three feet wide. This sled could carry a lot of caribou. They would hook all the dogs up to it—go 60 miles one way to bring back caribou meat. When the hunters got back, Oliver's grandmother helped to divide the meat among all the houses in the village. She would divide up maybe ten or fifteen caribou. There was a rack that must have been four and a half feet high. The sled was stored on this rack. His grandmother would pick up that sled by one end and put it up there all by herself. She was a very strong woman. Even as an old woman she had no gray hair and she had all her teeth. "She was just like man, but better than man."

In February when they camp in the hills hunting caribou, Oliver remembered how all the kids that could walk would pull the sled with all their household equipment on it. The kids that were too little would ride on the sled or be carried. His parents had twenty caribou skins sewed together and made into a tent. The tent had a hexagon-shaped floor and was pointed at the top. The family stayed in these tents out hunting till around the first of April.



(Sketch by Doretha Amouak)

In April the hunters would go hunting hair seals. They would hunt seals on a little island called Eek Island. This island is twelve miles off the mainland. They would go out in April and hunt the seals. They weighed between 75-100 pounds and were about five feet long. The seal meat would either be eaten right away or dried and stored. The seal might also be skinned and the skin made into a poke. Meat and oil would be stored inside. The seal blubber might also be placed inside and naturally rendered down if the poke were left in the summer sun. Seal oil is made for food dressings, frying and lamps. "That seal oil is used as salt and pepper to Eskimos." They hunt seals till June.

After the ice has gone out and seal hunting is finished, the Eskimos moved back from the island to go to fish camp. They used nets made from seal skin. The skin would be cut into thin strips and made into nets to catch the salmon and other fish. They would dry the fish for winter use. Since they had so few dogs, they did not put up a lot for them. That is how people lived a long time ago. They had no sugar, tea or flour.

In the summer, the women folk would pick berries and Oliver would go picking berries with them. They would put the berries in a big wooden barrel. This barrel was made of wood that was bent and sewed at the seams. These barrels also kept other berries and meat, water or seal oil. The lazy people of the village didn't pick many berries. They only picked enough for a meal. In the winter the people that were lazy would go around asking for food or would go hungry.

Oliver's grandfather was his pal. One time they were camping and Oliver's grandfather died. Oliver thought that he was just sleeping late. He told his mother to wake him up but she told him that he was sleeping but wouldn't wake up. His mother started to cry and he knew somthing was wrong. He didn't know what death was. They left his grandfather there on the ground covered with driftwood and rocks. Oliver was about five years old. There was a big flu at the time. Everybody was sick. There was no wind and it was very hot. It was so smokey from tundra fires and forest fires that you could hardly see. Oliver's family had to move away from there even though his father was sick too. They loaded up the boat and got ready to go. His father was so sick that he couldn't row without tying himself to the oars. He rowed like that all the way to Unalakleet which was about 45 miles away!

Around 1900 the Russians first came to Unalakleet. The Russians were spread out along the coast clear down to Sitka. They hired some Eskimos to unload a ship that carried lumber and supplies for a new church. They worked them from in the morning till sundown. One Eskimo made homebrew. The Russians found out and they put this man in a round, egg-like house. They put him in this jail and started to whip him with willows until he bled. The others got mad about the beating and they told the Russians to leave the man alone. The Russians said no. They told the Eskimos to unload the ship but the Eskimos said that they wouldn't unload the ship until they let the one man go. So the Russians had no choice but to let him go because they couldn't unload the ship themselves. The wage the Eskimos received was white seal cloth—a yard for each day they worked. This was good because they only had skins and could use the cloth for many different things. The Eskimos worked all day and for dinner the Russians gave them one cracker and a cup of tea.

The first Russians that came to Unalakleet told the people that there was a sickness and they had to vaccinate them, so the Russians cut their arms and put some stuff on it. One night a villager's arm swelled up and the person died. One young man saw a little box, a small, snuff-size box, and the box contained the real medicine. This young man knew

it so he told the people. The people got mad and asked themselves why did the Russians not use the real medicine. The Russians had put up a fence around their houses. This log fence was about eight feet high and made with sharp points so that people wouldn't go over it. The Eskimos thought that they would kill the Russians since the Russians were killing them. One night they took canoes and went over to the other side. They brought bows and arrows with them. They shot maybe one or two Russians at a time until only one was left. These Eskimos told the Russian to go home and bring more Russians. "Twelve of you were not enough." They let that man go but he never came back. He probably drowned. If he had come back, the people of Unalakleet would have been sorry that they said that to him.

Oliver really doesn't believe in superstitions but he does know a lot about them. Oliver told of one superstition which concerned when a girl became a young woman. This happened around the age of fifteen. The girls were fenced in a corner and stayed there for four days. The girl was not allowed to look out of the corner to look at any fresh meat or men. If the girl looked, she would go blind.

Oliver and Olga still talk in the Eskimo languages. They know about seven different Eskimo dialects. They know where the languages originate and can speak all of them.

When Oliver saw Olga for the first time, he thought that the man she was going to marry wouldn't give her a good home so he stepped in and sent his sister down to St. Michael to get her. In 1916 they were married in the mining camp in which Oliver had been working. After their marriage, they moved to Nulato. There Oliver bought her a sewing machine. She made all their clothes on that machine and many-a-time Oliver carried it on his back when they moved.

Oliver then went to work in Tanana for the Alaska Railroad boat. The company cut his wages down to fifty dollars a month and knowing that he couldn't raise a family on that money, he quit that job and took one as a carpenter in Fairbanks. This was in 1947. He was with the Carpenter's Union for many years but quit them when they started hiring outsiders for the jobs that he felt should have gone to Alaskans. Then he worked as a janitor in a school. Another interesting job that Oliver and Olga had was dancing for tourists that traveled with Alaska Airlines. They even got to travel around the world on a tourist promotion campaign.

Oliver remembered that the old people of the villages would use roots, herbs and berries for medicine. They also believed in the Medicine Man. A plant called stinkweed would cure cancer, sores and colds. You could either boil it or dry it. Olga told a story of how stinkweed was used. An Eskimo woman from Shungnak had stomach cancer and had been in the hospital for six years. The doctor told her that there was no cure and that he was going to send her home to die. She told her husband to go to an old cabin and get some stinkweed. Her husband went to where she had told him to go and found some of the weed. She took the stinkweed and chewed it up and swallowed it. She did this for three months. At the end of this time she had no more cancer. Pretty soon she was up and around so she went back to Anchorage to see her doctor. The doctor couldn't believe his eyes. Unfortunately, it wasn't too long after that she was struck by a car and killed.

Kitty Harwood

Kitty Harwood was born and raised in the fishing village of Rampart, which is located on the Yukon River. She didn't leave Rampart until she was seventeen and on her way out to high school at Eklutna.

In this interview Kitty reminisces about her school days, life at fish camp and other experiences. She also has some advice for today's young people.

Currently employed by Doyon, Ltd., she holds the position of Director of Shareholder Relations.

—Doretha Amouak

Kitty Harwood. (Bruce Dunkle photo)

Some of Kitty's first experiences with school were frustrating. She had a lazy teacher who kept her and her niece in the seventh grade for four years. For this reason Kitty thought this would be her future and had no ambition to finish school. She thought there was no use to go on. Finally the Superintendent assisted the village in getting a new teacher for the school and this teacher gave the students some inspiration to continue. She promptly promoted Kitty and her niece to the eighth grade.

One time Kitty was doing a math problem but she couldn't get the answer even though the answer was in the back of the book. The new teacher tried to help her but even she couldn't figure out the solution. And so Kitty went home to work on that problem because it was puzzling her. Then all of a sudden it came to her; she was forgetting "division or something." She got the answer and when she went back to school the next day, she said real shyly, "Do you think I could go to high school?" The teacher then said she had been planning to talk to her about that. So both of them asked Kitty's mother (who was a widow and for whom Kitty had much admiration) if it was all right for her to go to the old boarding school in Eklutna. At that time it was a high school. Her mother briefly objected but finally Kitty convinced her that this was what she wanted and her mother agreed. She was seventeen when she left home and was accompanied by a nephew and a friend who were also attending Eklutna. She finished through her junior year in high school and learned many skills such as cooking, sewing and secretarial training which she has found very helpful.

The summer after her junior year she decided to go home for a visit and borrowed fifty dollars from her mother to come home on. She worked all summer at the Hunter Creek Mine to pay her mother back, buy clothes, school supplies and be able to have fare back to school in the fall. She was happy working there and she met her husband-to-be, fell in love and got married instead of returning to Eklutna.

Russian Orthodox Church at Eklutna. (Sketch by LindaMae Scolman)

She and her late husband moved back and forth between Rampart and Fairbanks for several years before settling in Fairbanks in 1951. During this time they were busily raising a family of seven children. Also during this time she served as the first Native woman United States Commissioner for the Territory of Alaska from 1946 to 1950 while in Rampart. This job included many interesting and worthwhile learning experiences.

When Kitty's youngest child was eight years old, she decided she would like to work again to help pay her family's expenses. She got a job as a matron and booking officer at the Fairbanks Police Station and remained there for over a year. She then took a State test and, passing it, got a job as a secretary to a school principal on Ft. Wainwright. She was also in charge of keeping attendance records for five schools on base. Kitty held this job for ten years before being offered a job at Doyon. Her position at Doyon is Director of Shareholder Relations.

Kitty feels fortunate to have lived in her generation's time. She has seen so many changes especially in the field of transportation. She grew up when traveling was with dog team and boat and yet has been witness to Man's landing on the moon. She says she now enjoys the best of both worlds.

Kitty has many memories: During the summer months while she was young, she worked at fish camp. "We were, we were little. Shucks, we were just barely big enough to hold onto a king salmon when we had to go out into the water with our bare feet and wash the fish" in preparation for her mother's cutting of the fish.

Her mother had a fish net about a mile above camp. Every morning Kitty and her brother ans sister would tow her mother in a little row boat by walking on the beach and pulling on a line. They would get to her brother's fish wheel and because they couldn't tow her around the wheel they would jump into the boat and row around the wheel. Their mother would say, "T'iyah t'iyah t'iyah" meaning "More, more, give it all you got!" As soon as they got to the upper end of the wheel, they would go ashore and run along the beach again, towing their mother upstream and rowing back down with a load of fish for home. To Kitty it wasn't hard work because they all worked together, which she thought was fun.

Her mother had a fish net about a mile above camp. Every morning Kitty and her brother and sister would tow her mother in a little row boat by walking on the beach and pulling on a line. They would get to her brother's fish wheel and because they couldn't tow her around the wheel they would jump into the boat and row around the wheel. Their mother would say, "T'iyah t'iyah t'iyah" meaning "More, more, give it all you got!" As soon as they got to the upper end of the wheel, they would go ashore and run along the beach again, towing their mother upstream and rowing back down with a load of fish for home. To Kitty it wasn't hard work because they all worked together, which she thought was fun.

In July and August their mother would take them blueberry picking. After they cut the fish for the dogs and for their own food or helped their mother, they would go out into the swamps for blueberries and they wouldn't return home until all the pots were full. Then her mother would sugar the blueberries down and put them in a keg for food for the winter.

"Those were good days though! They were hard but they were good!"

Kitty has this advice for young people: "When I was going to school we didn't have as many opportunities for aid as they do now. I encourage young people to go on to school and finish their education while this aid is available." Kitty was able to finish her own high school education about fifteen years ago when she received a General Education Diploma. She is full of enthusiasm when talking about the careers and fields open to today's youth. She now says, "Although I have been fortunate to be able to accomplish what I have set my mind on, I regret that the chances to further my schooling was not encouraged as it is now."

Kitty helping to wash fish. (Sketch by Doretha Amouak)

Rampart Post Office. (Photo courtesy of the Mike Erceg Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

Johnny Honea

Johnny Honea was raised in Ruby, an Athabascan village on the Yukon River. In his sixty-seven years he has seen much happen on the river. He presently lives in his old fish camp Big Eddie, twenty-three miles up-river from Ruby. He still finds time to occasionally trap, fish, hunt and drive dogs.

—Donna Kious

Old sidewalk in Ruby. (Sketch by LindaMae Scolman)

Johnny was born on September 17, 1911. "My father died when I was one year old and I never got to see him, never got to even see his picture. My mother died when I was about twelve." After that his half sister, who was married to Bill Honea, adopted him. One year later his sister separated from her husband and Johnny then went on his way to make his living.

"I used to cut wood, four-foot wood, for six dollars a day." He worked for wages here and there and also fished during the summer. In the summers of 1927 and 1928 he worked at a big fish camp twenty-eight miles below Ruby for a mail contractor taking care of about two hundred and fifty dogs. In the year 1931, he worked for a mining camp, twenty-four miles out from Ruby cutting wood. It took him about three months to cut one hundred and sixteen cords of wood by himself. There were no chain saws then; they used five foot cross-cut saws and two-man saws. In 1934 they came out with Swede saws. Some didn't like them and some did. He thought they cut wood a lot faster than the other tools they had used.

Johnny started trapping when he was thirteen years old but really didn't know how. It took him many years to get good at it. He learned how to trap from different people, mostly old-timers. He trapped a lot by himself and had some trouble learning the right way to set traps for the different animals. The fur prices were pretty high then, in 1926. Red foxes were almost a hundred dollars, silver gray fox was three hundred dollars and cross fox was a hundred and fifty dollars apiece. Beaver was quite a bit then, about a dollar an inch. To get around his trapline he used an average-sized dog team of about ten or eleven dogs. In those days they didn't have snow machines like they do today. And if they did, some of the people who worked hard and trapped good probably could of "cleaned out" the country pretty fast.

Johnny has seen a lot of changes in fishing in the past ten years. Years ago, they caught tons of fish and made dry fish out of them. In those days they had dog teams carrying the mail. They bundled up a lot of dry fish and sold it to the store keeper. Ever since the airplane has taken over carrying the mail, there are no more mail teams so they can't sell as much dry fish. After that they put up strips of fish for themselves. They got a commercial license and

Ruby, Alaska, 1913. (Photo courtesy of the R.K. Woods Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

started to sell whole fish caught in their fish wheels. Another change they've seen concerns regulations. They used to operate their fish wheels seven days a week but now the Fish and Game has made them stop their fish wheels two days out of the week or pay a fine if caught.

Johnny was married in 1935 and has a teenage daughter. Valerie has been in Fairbanks but is now enrolled at Galena High School. Her father said she will be a little closer to home so that she'll be able to drive her dog team once a week. Valerie ran in the Junior Race in Ruby last year and won. Johnny and his family are now permanently living in Big Eddie and have been there for the past four years. They had been coming to Big Eddie for many years but only in the summer for fishing. Now they have cabins to live in year round.

Johnny, as a teenager, saw the Ruby area swell to a population of around five thousand people. Miners were working at Long Creek and Poor Man. A lot of the old timers were leaving back in 1918. Some of them left in a Canadian boat called *Safire*, which went down with all the people. A lot of different people said different things about who or how many people survived but it was kind of a sad story to hear if you knew the people.

During this time the people in Ruby lived in tents and frame shacks. The frame shacks were insulated with sawdust from the big sawmill. A lot of the building materials and hardware came by boat. There was a lot of traffic on the Yukon River when all the boats and small stern wheelers came.

Johnny Honea at his fish camp. (Photo by Roger McPherson)

Bill McCarty

Bill McCarty was born at Chena in 1904. His mother was Eva Cleever and his father was William McCarty, Sr. Bill apprenticed as a reindeer herder on the coast near Unalakleet as a young man and managed a herd near the Kokrines later on. For twenty-two years he trapped fur-bearing animals up the Novi (Nowitna River) and spent his summers fishing and boarding dogs. A worker all his life, blindness forced him to curtail many of his activities, but he still is in tune with the river life that surrounds him.

—Howard Gibson

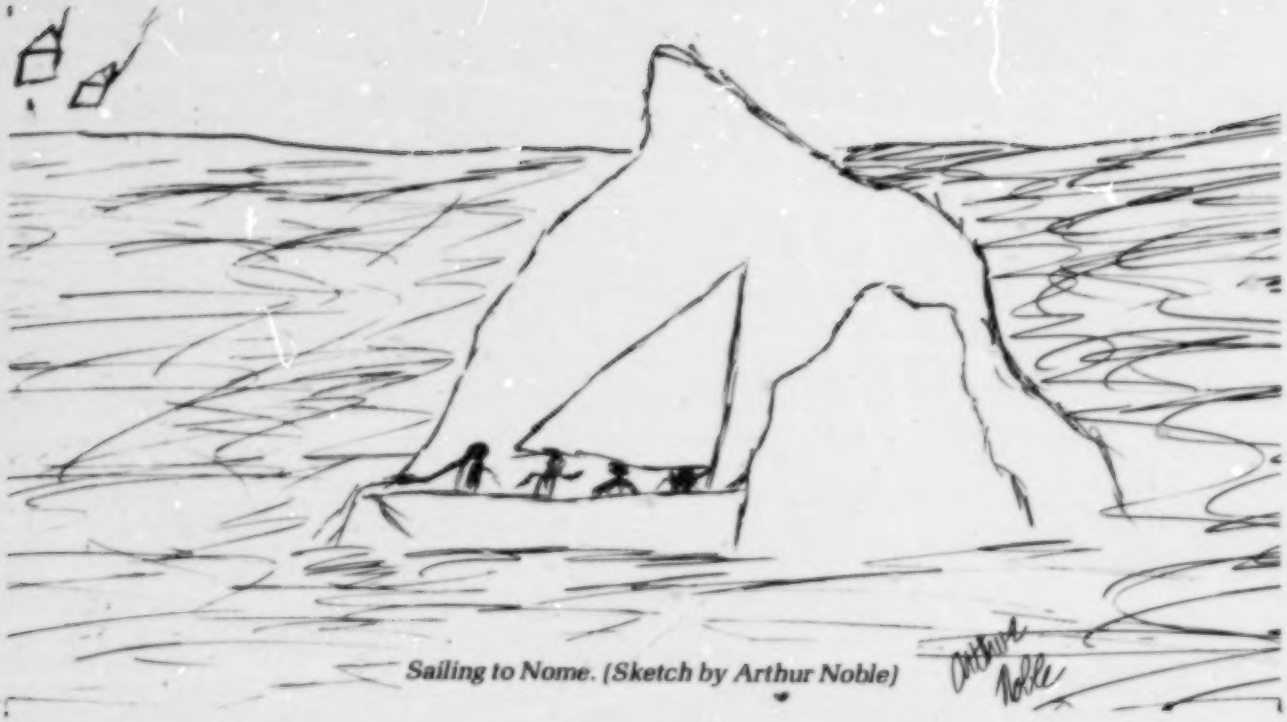
Bill McCarty. (Roger McPherson photo)

One of Bill's first memories is of the gold stampede and all the characters that came by on their way in 1908 to the gold fields. They came on horseback, with dog teams or on foot hauling Yukon sleds full of equipment and supplies. He can remember two road houses that his family operated below Kaltag and the steady stream of travelers that would pass through. He can also remember when they first started building the railroad from Nenana to Fairbanks and the hundreds and hundreds of boats and steamers that ran the river hauling the tons of freight, rails and equipment needed by that interior city. Once the railroad was finished, the river was still used to haul freight back from Nenana to points south but the volume of traffic decreased somewhat.

He can remember moving to Nulato where his step-father bought another roadhouse. Nulato at that time was a big village. There were two stores—one was operated by the Northern Commercial Company and the other was privately run.

Once Bill went to Nome with the school teacher's son from Kaltag but instead of going by dog team, they sailed in a schooner from Unalakleet to Nome with a bunch of Eskimos. All Bill can remember is that he and the teacher's son got really seasick from the three days of sailing and didn't even look around Nome but headed back the next day.

Bill had his first job as an apprentice reindeer herder in 1916 at the age of twelve. He lived north of Unalakleet in the winter and in the spring would move with the herd out to the sea coast. He worked for the Laplanders for three years. There were only a few wolves at that time so they did not have problems with them. Bill's wage as an apprentice herder was in the form of live reindeer which he sent back to Nulato. The first year he got four, the second year he got six and all the fawns; and then the third year, he got ten or twelve. He can't remember what happened to all the reindeer. He said his step-father traded off the cows for steers and used the steers for meat at his roadhouse. Being under age, Bill was



Sailing to Nome. (Sketch by Arthur Noble)

powerless to do anything about it. Bill quit his herding job when the Lyndenburgs bought out the herd from the Laplanders in 1919 even though they wanted him to stay on. He moved back to Nulato.

Bill then moved to Ft. Gibbon, an army post now called Tanana. He was in charge of the steam saw that cut the wood for the fort. There were six hundred soldiers there and they used five thousand cords of wood a winter. He was making pretty good wages when Capp Williams wrote and asked him to come back to Kokrines and herd reindeer. He persuaded Capp to pay him trained herder's pay and so started herding them at a place they called Hot Springs. It was a small herd of about seven or eight hundred head. Bill has remained in the Kokrine and Ruby areas ever since.

Bill's family was large—eighteen children but many of them died in infancy. Nevertheless he needed a large house for them. His was the biggest house at Kokrines.

Bill depended on his dogs for transportation. He carried mail part of two winters (1929-30) running the forty-five miles between Ruby and above Kokrine twice a week. There were telegraph stations all along the river, every fifty or sixty miles, and a wireless station at Nulato. Bill would call ahead and find out how big a load of mail there was and what the trail conditions were so he'd know how many sleds and dogs to bring. He had dogs both at Ruby and Kokrines. The mail teams would buy fish from the stores to feed their dogs. The stores in turn bought the fish from the local natives.

Bill used to fish for a living too. He fished for Al Brown and Red Allen. He figures he made good money. Everything was cheaper then and wages were fair. They'd get paid five dollars a day for labor and if you hunted and fished, you could make it by easy on that.

Bill trapped up the Novi for twenty-two years. Here he had lots of room to trap. "I had all kinds of country. I had one river to myself and all the forks, tributaries." He generally took his load up in the fall and hunted moose along the way. If he couldn't go up by boat, he'd go up by dog team after the first freeze. He'd come back to town at Christmas or New Year's and tried to move back into town in early spring before break up. Sometimes though they'd stay the whole winter and come out in boats after break up and trap rat or beaver all spring.

Bill used steel traps or deadfalls to catch animals. He used deadfalls on marten. For bait he used a little of everything. "Scraps, anything that smells a lot—fish eggs, fish. We even use hide off a moose. Moose—cut it up in pieces and stick it on a little pole. I used even canvas red tops, red tops off canvas gloves whenever I run out of bait. I just cut off the red cloth from my canvas gloves and cut it up into pieces and stick it in the house." He sold the fur outside to places like Seattle or St. Louis, sometimes California. He felt he got good prices for his pelts most years that he was up the Novi.

Reindeer Herd. (Photo courtesy of the Lomen Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

Fort Gibbon in Tanana. (Photo courtesy of the Foster Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

There have been lots of changes in Ruby over the years. Prices on things have really gone up. Bill recalled he rarely had to work for wages because the land would provide for you if you only worked at it. He did work as manager of the N.C. Store at Kokrines for three and a half years before he went blind. When they folded up that post because flu epidemics had practically wiped out the town, he quit rather than be transferred to another station.

Bill remembered how crowded second street was in Ruby in the early days with businesses, pool rooms and saloons. "Every other building was a saloon." Then there was a fire and almost all of Front Street burned down destroying many of the buildings.

Bill recalled how much fun and excitement there was on the Fourth of July long ago. Everybody would come out from the mines and off the river. There would be tug-of-wars, boat and canoe races, races of all descriptions for everybody. There were boxing and wrestling matches, too.

Ruby rebuilt somewhat after the fire but have really been building the last three or four years. Right now they're putting up a new high school on the hill by the airport.

Bill's early schooling was only through the fourth grade. "I didn't stay in school very much. The old man saw that I could write pretty good and read pretty well. I figure he thought that was enough school for me. I was in the fourth grade. He said, 'You got to work from here on,' and that's what I've done—worked, especially with the family. They just kept me busy night and day. Sometimes when the fish are running I work as long as the fish run. I stay up 'cause the fish don't run every day and I cut wood in between times. When I was managing the store, I had to work, trap near Kokrines and had to be in the post office on mail days so I would come home for that. My daughter was pretty young then but she would take care of the store for me. My wife and I would go out and trap beaver, mink, etc. We had to trap to make both ends meet."

Bill went blind about twenty-two years ago while living at his fishcamp. He was boarding dogs at the time in addition to fishing. He had two wheels going and was selling fish as well as boarding over one hundred dogs. Bill charged $5.00 a dog each month during the summer and then after the fish runs were over, he'd charge $7.00. When Bill started going blind, he wouldn't take any aid from welfare. As long as he could see his dogs, he wouldn't take relief but three years later there was one morning he missed watering some of the dogs so he decided he would have to have help. "I was too proud of myself to draw aid right away."

Now Bill lives comfortably on the banks of the Yukon listening to the sounds of the village and river that surround him.

House at Kokrines. (Sketch by LindaMae Scolman)

Off for the Creeks. Pat Keys, Freighter. (Photo courtesy of the Harry DeVane Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

Ruby, Alaska. (Photo courtesy of the R.K. Woods Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

Agnes Mayo Moore

Agnes Mayo Moore, the mother of 10 children, was born in the fishing village of Tanana, Alaska, in 1924. She was the youngest of 14 children. Her mother died when Agnes was just a baby so she was raised mostly by her father Matthew Daniels. Agnes spoke only Athabascan as a child and did not attend high school. It was not until 1970 that Agnes finished her high school education and received her General Education Diploma.

Presently she is taking courses at the University of Alaska here in Fairbanks and urges all young people to finish their education while they are still young. Agnes also teaches Indian dancing to school children under the Johnson O'Malley Program of the Fairbanks Native Association.

—Elaine Cederstrom

Agnes Mayo Moore. (Sketch by LindaMae Scolman)

In the village where I grew up there was no running water, no electric or gas stoves. There wasn't even a radio. From the time you got up till the time you went to bed you had chores to do. There was water to pack, wood that had to be brought in and chopped for the fire, etc.

My parents set aside a certain part of the day when we could play. We used to take the bark off of the cottonwood tree and make little boats out of them. Then we'd run up and down the beach with our boats. Another thing we used to do was to pull up the grass and make dolls out of it. When the fish were running and our parents were busy catching and cutting fish, we would take the little fish nobody else wanted, cut them and build our little fish house.

In the village when I was younger, the favorite foods were fish eggs, fish heads and fresh caribou cooked by a campfire—the head and the tongue. It makes me hungry to think about it.

The fishing village in which I grew up was called Tanana, and the language spoken there was Tanana Athabascan. It wasn't till I went to school that I learned to speak English. I had a hard time in school at first because I couldn't speak English very well. I had a chance to go to high school with all my friends, but my father, Matthew Daniels, would not allow me to go. Being that I was the youngest of fourteen children he wanted to hold on to me a little longer.

There are many superstitions I learned about in Tanana as a little girl that some of the Athabascan people still believe in today. Before my time when a girl was becoming a young woman they put her out in a tent, about one-half mile in the woods, very confined for about three months. While she was there she was expected to learn how to sew, cook, etc. They weren't allowed to eat any kind of fresh meat or berries. Everything had to be dried. They weren't allowed to look at boys or put their faces over hot boiling water because doing those things made you old and wrinkled before your time. You couldn't look at wild game of any kind especially bear. The reason for this was that animals have a spirit and if you looked at a bear, for instance, and later on have children, when your children get sick they'll make noises like a bear and go into convulsions. A woman is not allowed to eat bear meat until she's had four children. Everybody also believed in the medicine man until the minister told everybody that it was wrong—there was always God.

The church helped to change many of our old beliefs. The name of our mission in Tanana was the Mission of Our Savior. They used to have a mission school there, but I was too little to go at the time. One of the ministers that was at our church learned the Athabascan language, then he went down into the lower 48 and wrote a hymn book in Athabascan. Even though my father couldn't read English, he could recite Bible verses, having heard them from our minister.

Mission of Our Savior Church in Tanana. Agnes' father lies buried in an unmarked grave in the foreground. (Sketch by LindaMae Scolman)

The point of land that divides the Yukon and Tanana River, where the willows and dew grass grows, that's the place where the shrew mice live. Therefore the Indian people call that point *t/ee dool ts'ishe/dinh*, meaning where the mice live.

I can't remember if the Athabascan had a trade or barter system. If something was needed it was usually just given to them. One time my father lost a whole team of dogs in the open water of the Yukon River. He just went to the village and told everybody what happened. In two days he had a full team and two sleds. The Indian people are very generous people. They just helped each other along.

There are around eleven tribes of Indians in the Interior. Each tribe had more or less their own way of doing things; so when a stranger came to town, they went and met the stranger so they could find out what he was doing. Once they found out, they'd give him something to eat and send him on his way.

My grandfather did not know paper money was worth anything. He just threw it away or used it to start a fire. He didn't even know quarters were worth anything. He told my grandmother to make a parka for my mother using quarters for decoration.

Life in the village was very peaceful and quiet. I enjoyed my childhood days very much. Everybody did what was expected of them. If you were a little girl in the village you were expected to grow up, get married, make a good wife, and have children.

There have been many changes in Tanana since I was a child. One of the biggest changes is now that we have State law. You can't cut wood anywhere, fish when and where you please. You can't hunt or trap like you used to. There never used to be cars or snowmobiles. I don't mind the cars, but the snowmobiles make too much noise, and they're killing and crippling people everywhere. The snowmobiles are very dangerous.

Front Street in Tanana, Alaska. (Photo courtesy of the R.K. Woods Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

Agnes examining spruce roots. (Bruce Dunkle photo)

I feel that the biggest change has been in the Indian people, especially the younger people. I don't like the changes I've seen in younger people. I was taught as a child to obey, be still, to listen when other people are talking. The younger people don't respect the older people anymore or the old ways of doing things. They are between two cultures—the Indian and the White culture. The government sends them off to only English-speaking schools so that they don't even know how to speak their own language. I really think that's sad, but I don't know what to do about it. I always hope that things will change for the better.

I first came to Fairbanks in 1951. I didn't like it at all because I couldn't communicate with the white people. I wouldn't go to the store because I didn't want them to look at me. I still feel that way sometimes. One of the hardest things to get over though was the food. I'd go to the store and couldn't find any Indian food. When it's the spring or the fall I still get homesick, especially for Indian food.

Potlatches were special gatherings. They were given at holiday time or for the deceased. Potlatches sometimes were given in memory of a loved one who had died years before. In the middle of the summer when a big kill was made, such as a moose, the person who made the kill would give a potlatch so that the meat would not go to waste. There was lots of food at a potlatch. The people would eat three meals a day at the host's house. After everybody was finished eating, they would start to Indian dance and sing Indian songs. They would start out with the Wash Tub Dance.

The preparations for a potlatch were quite detailed. The men would be told about a potlatch up to a year before it actually took place. They would start saving the best cuts of meat off the game that they killed. Women would get busy making the presents that would be given out. They were held in the old mission in Tanana where the people who were in mourning for somebody gave practically everything they had away. My father gave a potlatch; I guess it was for my mother. Afterward all he had left was one blanket and a caribou skin mattress. Now potlatches are held in Nuchalawoyya, among other places.

When I was growing up the older people usually stayed with one of their sons or daughters until they died, but now it seems like a burden to them to have the older people around. That's why I'm glad the the government can take care of the older people and have places like Golden Towers and Careage North.

Lilly Pitka

Lilly Pitka is an accomplished skin sewer and is known for her beautiful beadwork. Born in 1912, she spent most of her childhood in fish camps and winter camps. She began school in Stevens Village, but her family moved to camps outside Ft. Yukon after the fourth grade and that was the end of her formal schooling. She did not move to stay in Ft. Yukon then until her own son was ready for school. At first it was hard for her because of language differences to get along with Whites but through working for the storekeeper, she gradually learned the language. She still speaks Gwitchin and wants young people to learn the language and culture of the Yukon Flats area.

—Leah Williams

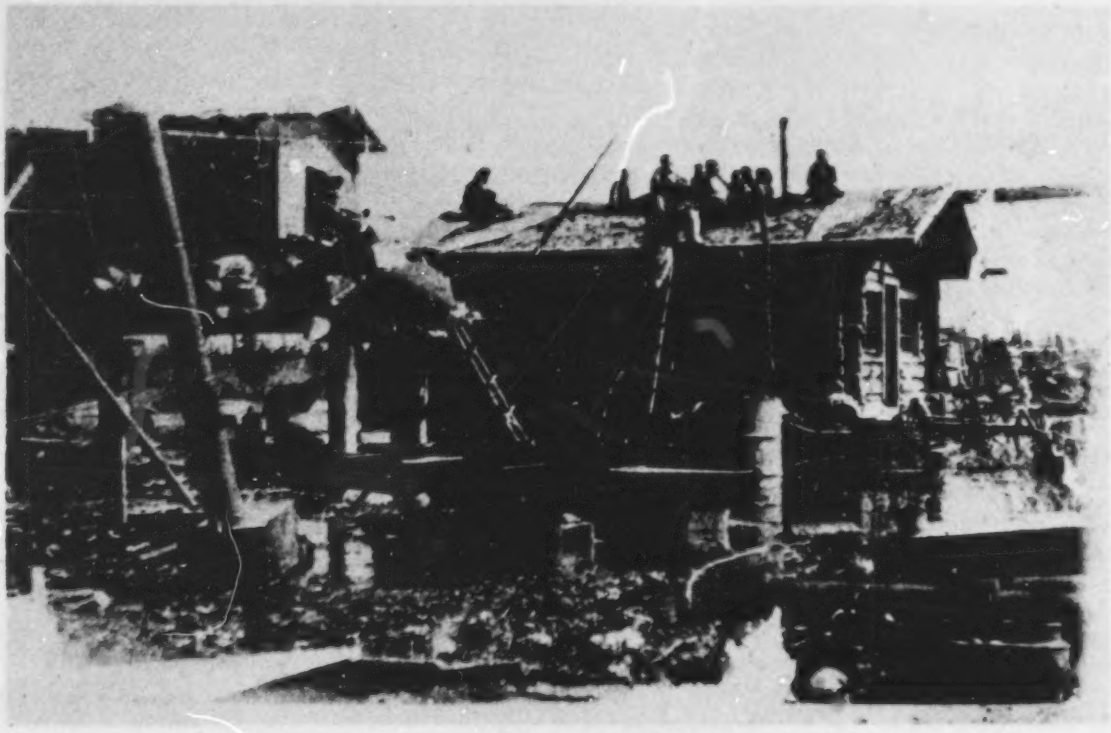
As a young girl I attended a small, one room mission school in Stevens Village. I loved going to school. I was learning fast. I just went up to the fourth grade because we moved to Ft. Yukon when I was fourteen. We went out to camp during the winter time, so I was unable to finish school. Camp was an education, too. All of us had chores to do. We lived in a tent, the walls were of logs with a tent over that. That's what we'd call a tent frame. We heated it with a Yukon stove that we bought in Ft. Yukon at Carter's Store.

In June we would go out to fish camp and stay there all summer fishing for salmon. We used fish wheels. While at fish camp I helped my parents cut fish. I started when I was eleven years old. I cut some for dogs, but I also cut some for eating. Our fish camp was below Ft. Yukon. They used to call it Pilot Station. There were other camps around too, about half a mile or a mile from us.

I like both winter camp and summer camp. But sometimes winter camp gets too cold even though we go out to the river and check the snares.

When I was going to school in Stevens Village I spoke Koyukon Athabascan but the people who ran the school made me speak English. I had a hard time. When we moved to Ft. Yukon I couldn't understand English. I could just read and write it a little bit. I didn't really learn English for a long time. We would always be at fish camp or winter camp and use only our Indian language. But when my boy was nine years old he was supposed to go to school, so we had to move into Ft. Yukon. I started to work for the storekeeper sewing and cleaning. That's when I learned how to speak English. From then on we stayed in town for the winter but in the summer we went out to fish camp.

Lilly Pitka. (Sketch by LindaMae Scolman).



Preparing for the 1949 flood in Ft. Yukon. Lilly is climbing up the ladder.

In the spring of 1949, there was a really bad flood in Ft. Yukon. The ice jammed below the village and water backed up for miles. Everyone scrambled madly to put their possessions up above the water but most people lost everything anyway. I took my daughter and my mother and we went to the house of a friend. This house was up on a little higher ground than most of the houses in the old village. We packed blankets, a little food and baby's bottle up there and waited for the water to rise. I saw my own house go by along with huge chunks of ice that were much bigger than my house. I was scared. The water rose and rose until it was about half-way up on the house we were sitting on. We had to wait for about three hours until someone in a boat came by and took us off. After a few days the water went down and we started searching for our belongings. I found our old house and took out the things that we could save. There wasn't much. All summer long we lived in tents while our new house was being built. I worked for a lady all that summer and she helped me to buy things to replace the stuff we lost. Not too many people went back to that old village to live because they were afraid it might flood again.

I moved to Fairbanks in 1962, and have lived here ever since. But I sometimes go back to Ft. Yukon to visit my son-in-law. At first I didn't like Fairbanks. I guess I was used to living out in the woods all the time. But after I started working, I thought it was all right. I worked in the kitchen at St. Joseph's Hospital.

During the flood in 1967, I was living in Graehl. We had no warning about the flood. I went out at 2 o'clock in the morning and the water was up to my chest. I can remember getting dressed in heavy clothes. I even put on a pair of jeans—the only time in my life that I wore any. A boat came around to get us out of there and the man wanted to carry me but I told him that I would walk through the water instead. Gee, it was cold. He took me by the hand and walked me to the boat. It was hard for me to get into the boat. I guess I had too much wet clothes on. The man in the boat pulled and the man in the water pushed but I still had a hard time getting into the boat. But all we lost was our couch and a few other pieces of furniture. Everything else we put up in the attic. It took a long time to clean up after the flood. The guy next door had a hose so we used that to clean the floor.

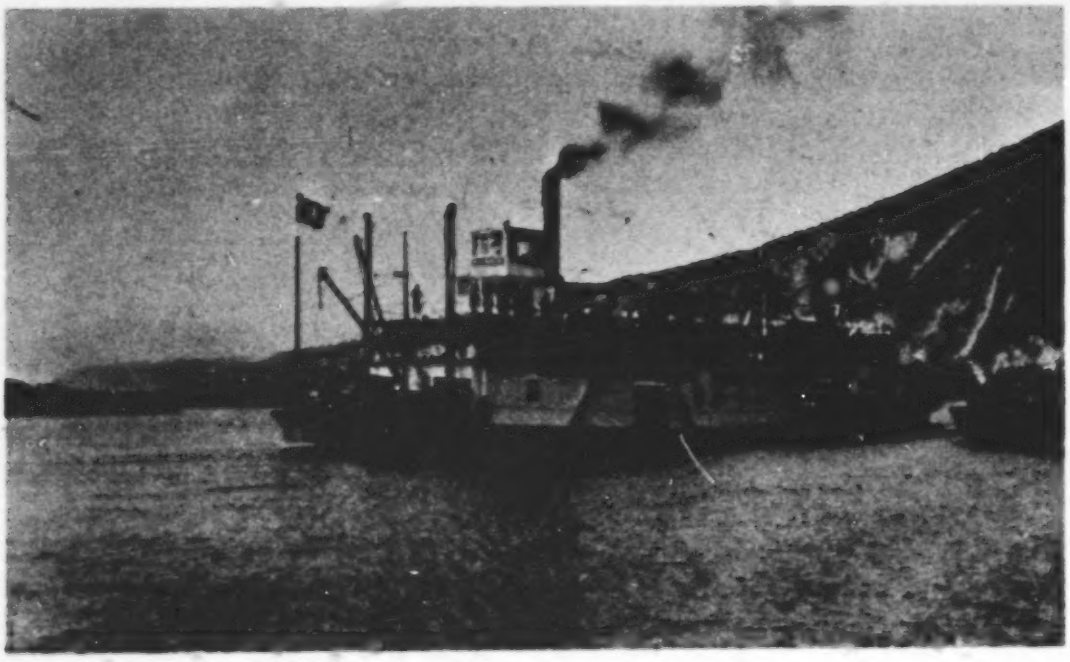
I get lonesome for Ft. Yukon at times. I have lots of memories. One time I had a sore leg. I couldn't even walk on it, it was so painful. My mother put water in a big tub. She put the water on the stove and she went out and got some spruce tree buds and

cottonwood buds and some other kinds. She filled up a big flour sack. When she came back the water was boiling and she dumped the sack full in there and boiled it for a long time. It made the water a dark brown. Then she put it on the floor and put two boards over it. She took my clothes off and I sat on the boards with a blanket around me so that no air could come in or go out. Oh, it was just like a steam bath. I sat there for about four hours or until the water cooled off a little bit. It felt lukewarm. Then she washed me up after that. She said to get in bed so I did and she covered me up really good and told me not to uncover. It was so hot under there. I finally passed out! I guess I slept for a long time, but finally when I work up the aching was gone. I stood up and walked around and it didn't hurt. That's the way she cured my pain.

Another memory I have is when I was a little girl of about seven or eight years old. My mother used to make rag dolls for me. She would make them out of old denim pants and stuff them with pieces of cut up rags. I can't remember what kind of clothes I used to put on them but anyway I was sure happy to have them. We never had any kind of toys in those days except what we made. My father used to carve us boats out of cottonwood bark and I'd sit on the river bank and make streams out of rocks to make the water look like real creeks and then I'd put rocks in my boats for people and then send my boats down my make-believe creek. Sometimes we would play house with houses we would make out of willows. One Christmas, when I was in the fourth grade, the teacher at Stevens Village gave each of the seven girls in class a doll with pretty clothes on it. We all had dolls and we'd get together and play with our dolls. I guess I was twelve years old then. I made a squirrel skin parka for my doll. Somebody gave me the skin. When we moved to Ft. Yukon, I was fourteen years old and I was still carrying that doll with me on the old steamer **Yukon**. I used to walk around on the steam boat carrying my doll and the cooks and pilots used to stop me and look at my doll and talk to me but I didn't understand them 'cause they talked in English.

At one time my sister made a rag doll for me and she filled it up with gravel. Boy, was I happy even though it was so heavy. The doll was about two feet high. Boy, I must have been strong to carry that doll around but I sure loved it. When I was fourteen years old I forgot all about dolls. I started to sew and I sure enjoyed that. I had lots of fun, better than playing with dolls. I made lots of pretty things. I made myself happy when I finished making them.

I like where I'm living now. There are lots of older people there and I can go and visit with them when I want to. I often have relatives stay with me from out of town, too, so I can get caught up on what's been happening out in the villages.



The riverboat **Yukon**. *(Photo courtesy of the Selid-Bassoc Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)*

Staff members admiring Lilly's work. (Bruce Dunkle photo).

Edith Tegoseak

Edith Tegoseak was born and raised in Barrow, commonly known as the "Top of the World." Located on the shores of the Arctic Ocean, it is the largest and northernmost Eskimo village in Alaska, about five hundred miles northwest of Fairbanks. Edith moved to Fairbanks about thirty years ago and has been witness to many changes both before leaving Barrow and while here.

—Donna Kious

Edith Tegoseak. (Sketch by LindaMae Scolman)

Edith was born seventy-five years ago on January 14, 1903, to Mr. and Mrs. Egowak. Before she was a year old, her parents had another baby so her father's mother took her home and raised Edith like she was her own. There were seven children in Edith's family.

In Barrow, she can remember when Charles Brower ran the only trading post. Here the Natives bought supplies like flour, sugar, yard goods and ammunition that were shipped in on the summer supply boats.

Ten miles away from the village of Barrow was a point of land jutting out into the ocean. Here Eskimos gathered to hunt the owls that could be found in large numbers. The Inupiat name for this point is *Utpeavik* meaning "hunting owl place." Right now many people call this point *Utkeagvik* for some unknown reason, maybe it's just a mistake in pronunciation. The English for this land is Point Barrow.

As a youngster, Edith remembers her family hunting wild game for food. Everyone still depended on the land or the sea to give them enough food to live on year round. They hunted such animals as caribou, owls, and hawks on land and seals and whales in the sea, and waterfowl and fish in the rivers. The sea animals were very important to the Eskimo. From them came meat and fat, hides and furs. Hunting the whales in the spring was a traditional event. For about a month starting in late April the hunting crews would go out in the skin umiaks looking for the whales. In June the crews celebrate the end of their successful hunting season in a festival called *Nalukutak* or "Blanket Toss." The people share special delicacies such as sour meat and muktuk. This celebration continues for several days. Natives from all over the North Slope gather to share in the games, dances and great quantities of food. It is really a fun time.

Edith went through the fourth grade in the Barrow school; still, much of her education was traditional. She watched her relatives as they went about their daily chores and she copied what they did. When she talks about getting an education in

schools, she thinks it's very good because we have more communication between people in other areas of the world and we need to be able to work with them. She especially likes the Headstart Program for Preschool children.

For fun, Edith remembers she used to play lots of games like tag or hide and seek. They also played jump rope. Most of their play took place outdoors. Their toys were made from natural materials such as sticks, stones, fur, etc.

In those days, they never really worried about getting a baby-sitter. "Well, they never fool around with babysitters. Our own babysitters were our backs under our parkas." Mothers would take their babies practically everywhere they went this way without worrying too much about the weather, as the baby was very protected under the parka.

Edith grew up in a sod house constructed over a driftwood frame and covered with gravel to keep it warm. There was no stove, just two seal oil lamps for light, cooking and heat. They melted ice for water that they got at *Utkeagvik* and brought home by dog team. At other times they melted snow that they found around camp for water.

Life was hard for an Eskimo family on the North Slope. The husband would leave early in the morning and go find food for his family. He had no gun. He might walk out onto the frozen ocean or walk miles inland to get game. He could end up chasing the game for miles and then have to haul it back home. When he got home, his wife would flesh out the caribou, seal or whatever he caught, and fix it for food and the skin for sewing into clothes, etc. Husbands and wives worked hard together.

Edith does not believe in superstitions but knows many who do. She is glad that she was born a Christian.

Edith learned how to sew from her aunt. She would dye leather to a dark red to use as decoration on fancy parkas or mukluks. First she'd soak the skin with the fur on in water for a few days until the hair fell off; then she'd crush red rock into powder, mix it with water till the water was dark red and then put in the skin to dye. They liked that color.

In 1919, Edith married Rueben Tegoseak. They had eleven children of which three have died. In 1948, they moved to Fairbanks. She remembers the city like it was yesterday when there were only a few buildings. Her husband worked for Alaska Railroad for fifteen years and then retired. He suffered a fatal heart attack two years after his retirement.

In 1967 like so many people in Fairbanks, Edith experienced the tragedy of the flood. "When that water arrived in the house, it just flowed into the house and the water was up to my underarms."

When Edith talks about the youth of today, she talks about the many changes that have occurred in their outlook towards old people. "Since I was old enough to talk and walk, my relatives taught me that I must not walk in front of old people but walk behind and if I have to walk in front, I should tell them I must go around. There's quite a lot of change since old times. Young people minded their parents long ago. We didn't interrupt our growing life with dopes and liquors. What we were told we were expected to listen to and learn from."

Edith is known for her helpfulness and generosity. Throughout the years she has shared this hospitality and her warm personality with friends and strangers alike.

Edith Tegoseak lighting the seal oil lamp at the Indian-Eskimo Olympics. (Margie Bauman photo, ©1978)

Edith has participated in many events in the Indian-Eskimo Olympics held every year in Fairbanks. She has danced many Eskimo dances and has taught a few people some of the motions to the dances. She has lit the seal oil lamp that begins the Olympics many times along with other Alaskan Natives.

Edith Tegoseak and Gene Numnik demonstrate a dance for school students. (Jody Lynn Smith photo).

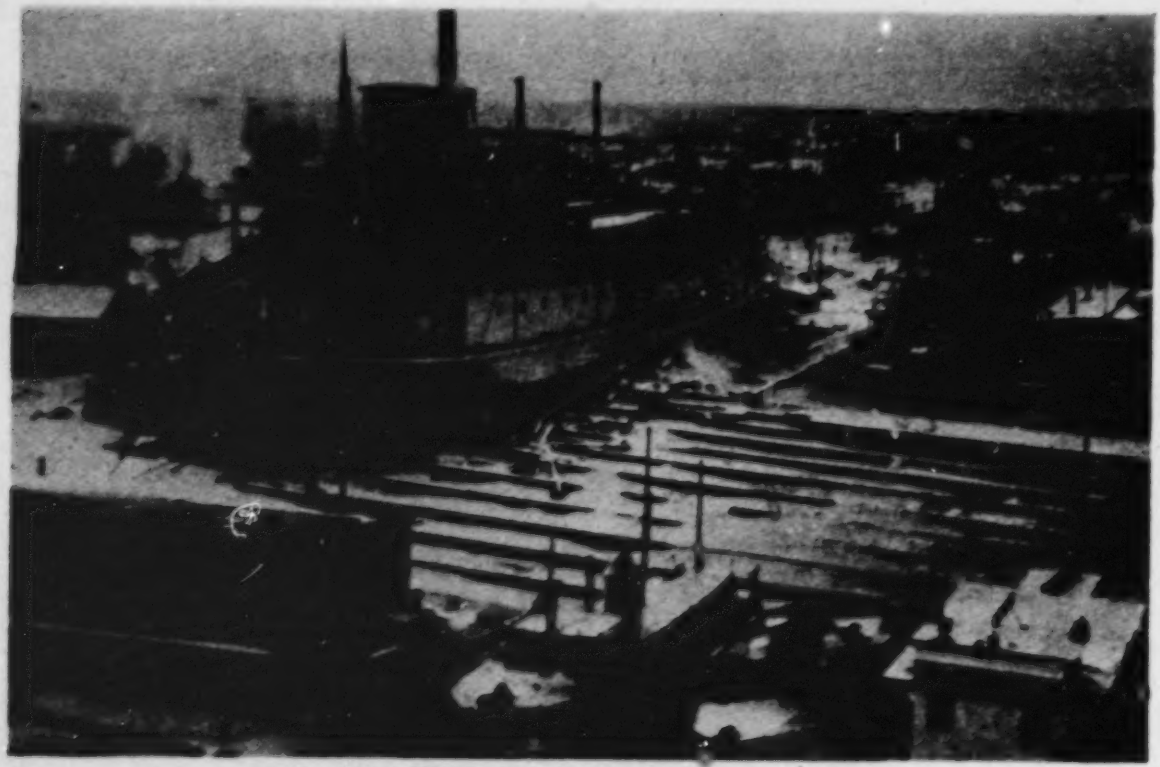
Waltor Woods

Waltor Woods, born in 1911, was raised in a fish camp a mile above Rampart. Even now he fishes there in the summer and then spends his winters in Manley Hot Springs. He wants to live in his camp permanently and is fixing up his cabins in hopes he can move there soon.

—Bobby Hunter

When the steamboat came to Rampart, as a child, Waltor would tell his parents that he was going to play on the beach. Then he would run to the steamboat, climb on board and the captain and the mates wouldn't say anything. He'd run to the kitchen, knowing the cook would have fruits—apples and oranges, etc.—and have himself a feast.

Waltor started working in the mines in Ruby when he was sixteen years of age, making fifty cents an hour for ten hours a day. Things were pretty cheap in those days, like he said, "We could get a carton of cigarettes there for a dollar and a quarter, and one hundred pounds of flour for eight dollars." Waltor explained, "If you make a few dollars in the fall, get your winter outfit and do a little trapping, you got it made!"



Riverboat Nenana under construction in Nenana, Alaska, 1932. (Photo courtesy of the Doris Southhall Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

Rampart, Alaska, 1904. (Photo courtesy of the R.K. Woods Collection, University of Alaska Archives.)

Waltor's mother died when he was only eighteen years old and by the time he was twenty-one years old, both his parents were dead. He ran the mail till he was twenty-nine by the only means of available transportation—dog sled. Waltor said "It was rough sometimes and sometimes it was really good. It took me four days to run the mail between Manley and Rampart."

Waltor also worked on boats. In 1938 he worked in Nenana going from Nenana to Marshall on the Yukon. It took ten-twelve days to make the round trip with the old sternwheelers. He started out as a deckhand. From there he went to being a fireman, stoking wood in the old furnace. It used to burn a cord an hour. "God, that was a lot of wood you have to throw." Waltor also worked on famous sternwheelers like the **Nenana** that's now at Alaskaland. He also worked on the steamer **Alice** and the steamer **Yukon**. To make extra spending money they would cut cords of wood for the steamboats that came by Rampart; and they'd leave it with the storekeeper or whoever took the contract, getting only eight dollars a cord.

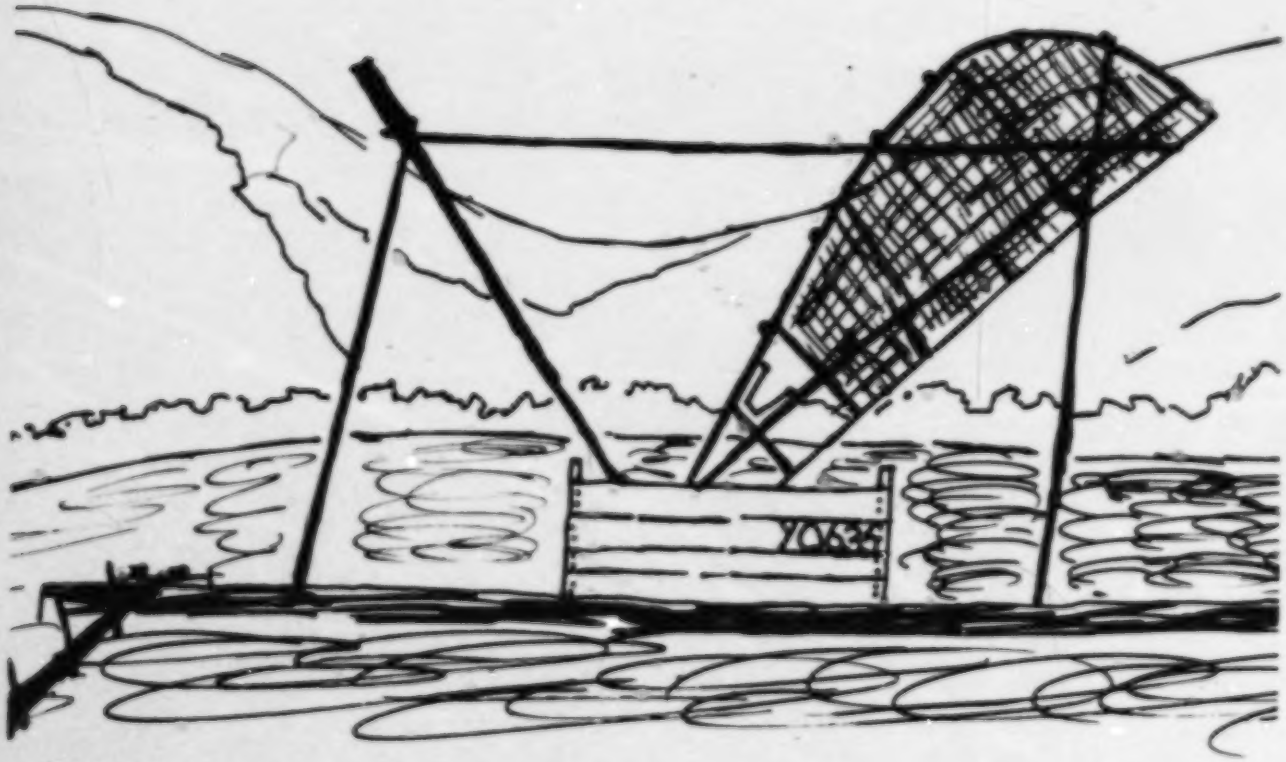
He went to Tanana and worked in the hospital for almost a year. Then went to Fairbanks and worked at odd jobs. He took any job he could get as jobs were very hard to find. When they opened up the road from Fairbanks to Whitehorse he drove truck between them in nineteen hours. "Boy, that was tiresome, I tell you. I was pooped when I got there."

After that he stayed in Fairbanks and worked on the railroad for six years in the car shop. He liked it because it was all inside work. He was working six days a week, but then they cut them down to five days a week, seven and a half hours a day; but that wasn't enough to support his family, so he went back to Tanana and worked on hospital construction. They were building the nurses quarters so he worked there that summer. They were also building the radar site so he tried it there for two months, but he went back to the hospital construction and worked for the rest of the season. Then he worked at odd jobs. "My kids were getting big. I had to keep hustling."

Waltor remembered how the flood nearly wiped out Rampart when the ice jammed at break up. Many of the old buildings that were thriving businesses in the old days were washed away. Waltor's dad told him when he first came to Rampart there was seven saloons and two thousand people in Rampart. Looking at the village now, that's hard to believe. Nowadays he fishes and cuts salmon strips. He sells to Seattle and to southeastern because "They can't cure fish down there. It's too damp, the humidity and all." Waltor said he hasn't spent a winter in Rampart for about fifteen years but he hopes to soon. He goes to Manley at freeze up and spends his winters there.

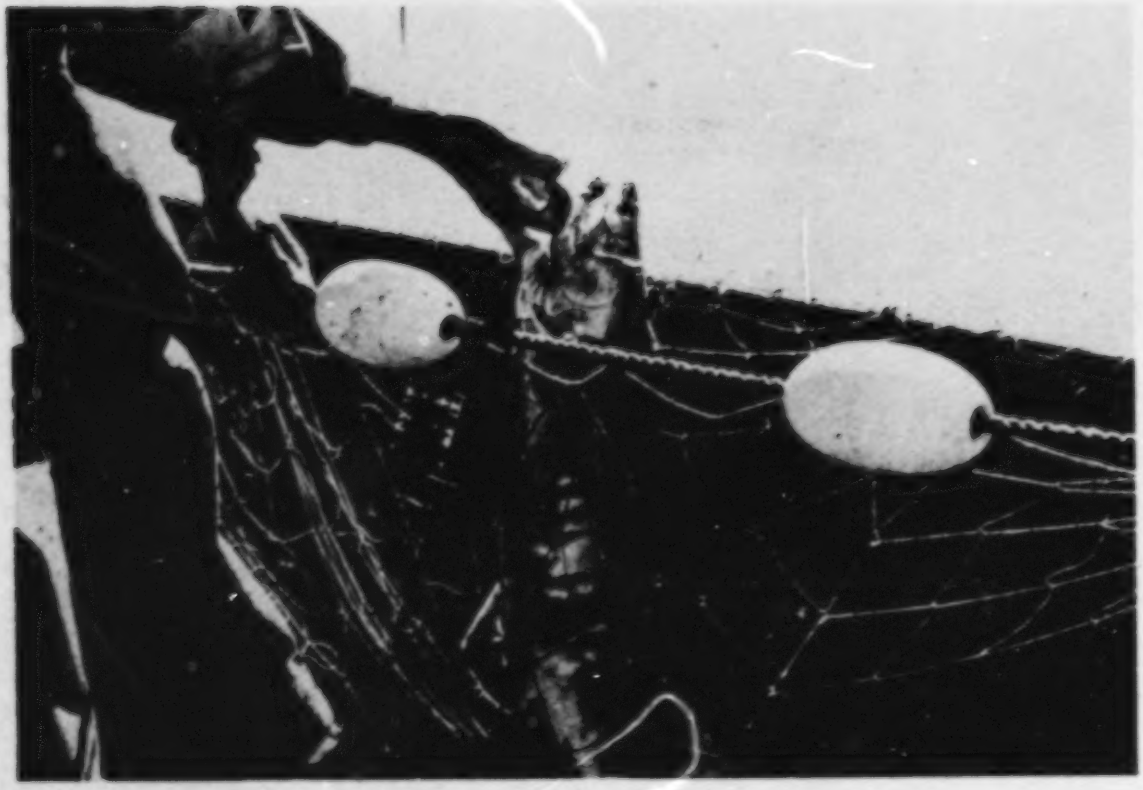
Waltor hasn't driven dogs for many years, but his son Raymond has a bunch of dogs and raises puppies. He wants to be a big dog musher.

Walter has eleven children—seven girls and four boys. Four of his children are going to school outside. Waltor is now living his happy life, fishing and watching his family grow with each and every day.



(Sketch by Bobbie Hunter)

(Sketch by Bobbie Hunter)



Getting a fish out of a net. (Roger McPherson photo)